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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE SECRETARY OF STATE

SUBJECT: Background of Italian Attitude toward the  
Committee for Free Albania

The following information has been received from a reliable  
but very delicate source.

1. On 2 August 1949 a report was received in Rome from  
Italian Minister Nicosi in Athens on the details of a conver-  
sation between him and the British Ambassador in Athens on  
24 July 1949.

2. According to Nicosi, the British Ambassador told  
him that the American Ambassador in Athens had recently in-  
formed him that the United States favored the entry of Greek  
forces into Albania in connection with the liquidation of the  
German pocket by making an example of an encroachment of the  
redist forces there as possible. While not stating that the  
British opposed this view, the British Ambassador implied that  
it was an American idea. In discussing the various political  
possibilities which existed in connection with Albania, the  
British Ambassador also observed that the United States intended  
to pay "with gold" for the overthrow of the Rumba regime. In  
this regard, the British Ambassador said that a committee would  
probably be set up in the United Nations Organization in order  
to deal with the Albanian problem which would arise.

3. At this point Nicosi observed that, if the Western  
powers anticipated a new situation in Albania, it would be a  
situation not to profit by Italy's experience in the matter,  
particularly in view of the long background of Italian interest  
in the area. To this the British Ambassador replied that Great  
Britain would welcome the opportunity of enjoying the benefit  
of Italian experience.

4. In his report to the Italian Foreign Office, Nicosi  
observed that the reaction of the British Ambassador indicated  
with two phenomena which he felt created a related whole. The  
first of these phenomena, he said, was the intensification of  
British intelligence operations aimed at Albania in June and

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July of this year. Ruscetti noted that four British Intelligence Service operatives had recently arrived in Albania and, under the cover of a BBC correspondence, had left Athens for Corfu a few days after his arrival, while the second, ostensibly a British General representative, had also left Athens and was last reported in the Epirus area. The second phenomenon, according to Ruscetti, was the responsiveness of anti-Italian manifestations in the Greek press.

3. In view of the above, Ruscetti concluded that the British Ambassador was probably not sincere in saying that Great Britain would like to profit by Italian experience in Albania and that the British would rather desire to express any developments in the Albanian situation in their own political interests; that, he felt, might also be the position of Albania between Yugoslavia and Greece or the maintenance of an independent Albania in which British influence would be paramount.

4. On the basis of this dispatch the Italian Government sent instructions to its Ambassadors in London and Washington to make representations to the Governments to which they were accredited of expanding Italy's interest in the maintenance of the independence and territorial integrity of Albania, and simultaneously to call attention to the effect of the Italian Government to place its experience in this matter at the disposition of the British and American Governments.

5. Subsequently, Italian concern along the lines indicated by Ruscetti's report was increased when the Italian Government learned of plans for the formation of a committee of Albanian elites and was interested still more when the announcement of the formation and membership of the Committee for Free Albania was announced late in August.

6. The chief characteristics of the Committee for Free Albania, from the Italian point of view, is that the Committee includes no one who is favorable to Italy. The Committee is regarded as a British creation and instrument. Notwithstanding active American interest in this matter, the Italian Government fears that the United States, in view of British claims to greater experience in this field, will permit the British a freer hand and that the latter will attempt to use the Committee for their own political ends. The Italian Foreign Office fears that numerous requests in accordance with the representations described in paragraph six above will not be fulfilled and that the result will therefore be contrary to Italian interests. Accordingly, the attitude of the Italian Foreign Office

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toward the Committee for Free Albania is presently one of diffidence.

9. Italian policy calls for the maintenance of the independence and territorial integrity of Albania at any cost. However, the Foreign Office has not yet decided upon any course of action to implement this policy because it lacks the necessary information on the Albanian situation. Accordingly, the Italian Foreign Office has hastened preparations for the departure for Tirana of the Italian diplomatic mission under Fermentini, which was expected to depart on or about 18 September. Fermentini's primary assignment at the beginning will be to report in as great detail as possible upon the internal situation of Albania, and to place Rome in a position to answer possible British observations which are anticipated in the near future on the alleged "fluidity" of the Albanian situation, which the Italians would interpret as confirmation of their suspicions that the British would be expecting imminent political changes.

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